

**FINAL - Wheaton Redevelopment Advisory Committee**  
**June 16, 2010**  
**Mid-County Regional Services – 2424 Reddie Drive Wheaton, MD 20902**

**Members Present,** Gregory Baker; Melissa Brown; Maureen Carrington; Eleanor Duckett; Jonathan Fink; Rahman Harrison; Manuel Hidalgo; Chris Lindsay; Thomas; Martin; Susan Petersen; Morey Rothberg; Dave Taghipour and Fran Ware

**Members Absent:** Mara Baer; Elizabeth Boyle; Zoe Lefkowitz; Filippo Leo; Diane Lynne; Erin Roberts; and Robert Schilke

**County Staff Present:** Gary Stith; Pete McGinnity; Rob Klein and Sharon Lasswell

**Meeting Called to Order** by Chairperson Greg Baker at 7:05 p.m.

**Approval of Minutes – Motion to approve the June minutes was made by Mr. Martin and seconded by Ms. Duckett. All were in favor and minutes were approved.**

**Draft Sector Plan Discussion** by Mr. Martin

- Public Hearing draft is scheduled to be posted on June 23.
- The Sector Plan recommends removing the Overlay Zone and rezoning all the CBD Zones to Commercial-Residential (CR) Zones. CR Zones allow a broad range of uses and are applied through a sectional map amendment consistent with the recommendations of a sector plan or a master plan. There was discussion regarding the various CR Zones as well as the Floor to Area Ratio (FAR)'s. Mr. Stith indicated White Flint is in the process of applying the CR Zones to that project. The guidelines are being developed. The Zoning Ordinance for the CR Zones already exists.
- Several points were discussed such as how big Wheaton should be, how dense, and the need for clarification for Wheaton being a CBD. The committee discussed the proposed zoning map (Figure 38 from the Draft Sector Plan) handed out by Mr. Martin. The map describes the maximum FAR in the various areas of the downtown. The Planning Board feels the densities in the CR Zone may be too ambitious for Wheaton. Regarding density, Mr. Stith indicated once Wheaton's image is changed, the market will be stronger and will be more of a determining factor than the zoning. Overall, the committee approves of the density indicated in the plan.
- Mr. Martin mentioned transition areas and indicated they may be the most politically sensitive issue in the staff draft. The staff draft is ambiguous as to what types of projects can go in the transition areas.
- Ms. Duckett stated there is community concern that retail will be permitted in the buffer areas. She reported Dr. Hanson has indicated there may be another zone that could handle the buffer areas other than the CR Zone.
- The committee has several questions for Park & Planning staff: (1) would town houses in a CR Zone be allowed to convert from residential to commercial; and (2) would the guidelines of a Homeowners Association override the zoning in a given area?

**Draft Sector Plan Discussion** by Mr. Martin (cont'd)

- Regarding transportation issues, WRAC might want to provide some guidance to the planning staff as to whether the citizens are willing to accept slower traffic in Wheaton in order to improve the quality of life for pedestrians, cyclists, and people dining out.
- Slowing the traffic would not reduce the capacity as you still have the same number of cars they are just closer together.
- While the County cannot dictate the state roads, the Existing and Proposed Street Network (Figure 26) in the Sector Plan Draft gives the County leverage to go to the State and ask for those characteristic changes.
- Mr. Lindsay expressed concern regarding a possible bike path going through the showroom of his dealership according to the Existing and Proposed Street Network Map in the staff draft. He will discuss this with Ms. Tallant.
- The WRAC, at a previous meeting, agreed that the Sector Plan as presented substantially matches up, in concept, with WRAC's previous goals.
- For the July WRAC meeting, Mr. Martin will prepare a list of questions concerning the Sector Plan Draft. Once WRAC reviews the questions, they will be given to Ms. Tallant. Two questions pertain to the placement and rationale of the bike paths, and the CBD connection to Wheaton Regional Park.
- The work group discussed office space in the downtown and the number of jobs that would bring. There is a need for an Economic Base in the downtown.
- Mr. Klein will send out an email to WRAC when the Sector Plan draft is posted on the web.
- The next Planning and Visioning Subcommittee meeting will be July 12 at 7:00 pm.
- The Planning and Visioning Subcommittee can look at the key points of the Sector Plan and bring back recommendations to the WRAC at the July 21 monthly meeting. The WRAC will have time to prepare testimony before the July 29 Sector Plan public hearing.

**Request for Qualifications (RFQ)** by Mr. Stith

- The RFQ Qualification Selection Committee met with a potential developer for the core area on June 10, which includes the WMATA property. The Committee is ready to make a recommendation to the County Executive on July 1. The County will work with the developer to prepare a Letter of Intent that would go to the WMATA Board in September. WRAC involvement with the developer could begin sometime in October on a concept plan. After the public involvement phase to design the project, a General Development Agreement would specify the developer, WMATA and the County's obligations. Mr. Baker indicated over the next few months, the Project Review Subcommittee would be developing a structure in which to work with the developer beginning in October.
- On June 17, the County will meet with a potential developer for Lot 14 at Blueridge Avenue. At this time, the Committee is not ready to make a recommendation to the County Executive.

**WRAC Candidate Interview Committee & Process by Mr. McGinnity**

- There are 16 applicants - interviews will take place over three days.
- Once the Interview Committee submits recommendations to the County Executive, it could take two to three weeks for the County Executive to make his decision. We could have a list of County Executive appointments in late July.
- There will be an orientation for the new WRAC members. They should be on board for the September meeting. Out-going members are expected to be at the July meeting as they are still members until they are replaced in September. All first-term members, except for Ms. Baer, will be returning for another term.

**Rural Neighborhood Cluster (RNC) Zones – Off Street Parking – Zoning Text Amendment (ZTA) 10-07 -- First Baptist Church of Wheaton by Mr. Klein**

- Council members Navarro and Elrich introduced ZTA 10-07 pertaining to parking in rural zones would require that parking lots greater than 50 vehicles be located within 500 feet of an arterial road or a road at least four lanes wide.
- The ZTA has a major impact on the proposed move of the First Baptist Church of Wheaton to Olney.
- In a letter from Rev. Williams to the Council President, the church states they have been in this process for the past four years. Up to this time, there has been no mention of any legislation. They have reduced both the parking lot and the building size by 40%, leaving 11 of their 14 acres undeveloped. The Church feels the ZTA applies only to them in Montgomery County and is coming extremely late in the process.
- The church was nearing the final steps of Planning Board approval when the ZTA was introduced.
- In a letter to the First Baptist Church of Wheaton, Washington Property Company indicated, they will terminate their agreement with the church if the ZTA is passed.
- The attorney's for Washington Property Company have indicated there will be a law suite.
- Mr. Klein reminded WRAC they voted to support the Washington Properties project in downtown Wheaton at a previous meeting.
- The Council is holding a public hearing on the ZTA on July 13 at 1:30 pm.
- Mr. Baker recapped by stating if the ZTA is passed, it will preclude the First Baptist Church of Wheaton from moving to Olney and precludes Washington Property Company from developing their project in Wheaton. This is a critical project to the core of Wheaton.
- MCCAB and the East County Citizens Advisory Committee have both voted in favor of the ZTA.

**MOTION by Mr. Baker and second by Ms. Petersen to –**

**Approve the WRAC letter in opposition of the proposed Zoning Text Amendment (ZTA) 10-07 RNC Zones – Off Street Parking (regarding First Baptist Church of Wheaton) and forward it to the County Council for the July 13 public hearing. The impact of this ZTA will directly and adversely affect a substantial redevelopment opportunity for the Wheaton area, as well as negatively impact a longstanding good neighbor of the Wheaton community. The Motion passed with all members in favor.**

**WRAC Redevelopment Project Status Sheet by Mr. Baker**

- The Redevelopment staff has prepared a “tracking” sheet for the major Wheaton Redevelopment Projects that WRAC is working on. This will enable WRAC to do their job better and track projects from their beginning to the end. Mr. Baker hopes to have the tracking sheet at every WRAC meeting.

**Redevelopment Report by Mr. Stith**

- Rafferty Center Update – The developer has been notified that the County is not interested in retaining the Rafferty Center for the use as a Recreation Center. The Rafferty Center has no restrooms, no office space, no parking, and no access or utility easements. It would require the County to buy additional properties. Using the Rafferty Center would require the County to operate a Recreation Center that was split a block and a half apart.

Instead, the County will build a new full size Recreation Center (approximately 35,000 sq. ft.) at the SW quadrant at Randolph Road and Georgia Avenue. State Highway will continue to use this site over the next few years for staging while they redo the Randolph Road intersection. Once they are finished and the site is cleared, the County will begin construction of the new Recreation Center.

The developer plans to tear down the Rafferty Center and replace it with four additional town house units and more open space in their project. Their new plan will require Planning Board approval.

There was a recommendation to use the existing Recreation Center as a performance space once the new Recreation Center is built.

- Pedestrian Walkway – A 17-panel mural (5’ tall x 51’ long) will be installed on the north wall of the walkway on June 24th. The mural was created by local high school students from Kennedy, Einstein and Wheaton under the direction of Ms. Carien Quiroga of Arts on The Block and support of Ms. Jan Goldstein. The Arts and Humanities Council donated \$4,000 toward the costs of moving the mural from its current location on Fern Street to the Pedestrian Walkway. Ms. Fran Abrams was very instrumental in this process.

**MOTION by Mr. Baker and second by Ms. Brown to –**

**Write a letter to the Arts and Humanities Council expressing appreciation, in particular, the efforts of Ms. Abrams, for providing a \$4,000 donation that preserved a key piece of public art in Wheaton. Motion Passed with all members in favor.**

**Subcommittee Reports**

Project Review – Ms. Petersen –Safeway presented their design at a community meeting on June 7. The design is basically the same as it was. There were a few concerns from those present at the June 7 meeting: Safeway talked about an 8 – 14 foot median on Reddie Drive for access to Metro, but it was not shown on Safeway’s plans. Mr. Stith commented the Transportation Division for Park and Planning would like to see a pedestrian crosswalk between the Metro exit and the new entrance that is being required at Safeway. The County Department of Transportation is concerned that could be a dangerous location for a crosswalk due to the amount of traffic on Reddie Drive. This decision will not be made by Safeway, but will be worked out between the agencies.

### **Subcommittee Reports**

#### Project Review (cont'd)

Mr. Baker mentioned the importance of staying on top of the PHED ZTA worksessions and the Planning Board hearings on July 22 for BB&T and Washington Properties. Ms. Petersen indicated the subcommittee is on top of these issues.

#### Economic Development – Mr. Fink

- Staff from the Department of Economic Development attended the June 1 meeting to give a presentation on the Small Business Tool Kit.
- The committee discussed the need to enhance their relationship with the civic associations. They are looking at doing some survey work to update the small business data they have from previous surveys. The subcommittee has talked about working with the civic associations to develop and execute surveys for the Flea Market.
- There is interest in engaging the civic associations. The subcommittee would like to develop a list of the various civic associations with a contact name and number to be used as a resource.

Green Wheaton – Mr. Klein – The group was very busy last month. There was nothing new at this time.

Meeting adjourned at 9:09.

**Please note: your name will become public information, recorded in the minutes of this WRAC Committee meeting, which may be photocopied and disseminated to various groups, and may appear on the internet and become retrievable by internet search engines."**